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ABSTRACT

This paper relates the experiences of an early childhood professor from the Freie University of Berlin on a trip through East Asia to provide advice and assistance on the situational approach to preschool education. Impressions of the sociopolitical and educational environment and needs of Thailand, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, and the Philippines are presented. It describes the educational and social problems in these nations, as well as the attitudes of local teachers, administrators, government officials, parents, and children. Among the impressions noted are: (1) the planners and inspectors at the workshop in Bangkok were not prepared to accept an imported package to meet their needs and wanted to develop an indigenous solution; (2) the relationship between the Thai village parents and the schools is adversarial; (3) the 1997 transfer of Hong Kong to Chinese control will have drastic implications for Hong Kong preschoolers, who are neither British nor Chinese; (4) preschools in Hong Kong are based on rigid drills and standardized exams; (5) the variety of religions in Indonesia is a significant factor for preschool development; (6) Indonesian preschools adapt primary school curricula; (7) Singapore schools resemble those of Hong Kong, with rote drills and standardized tests; (8) well-educated Singapore mothers are rewarded by being allowed to have more than one child; (9) in Malaysia, language, class, and race all impinge upon preschool education; and (10) in the Philippines, poverty, malnutrition, prostitution, and a guerrilla war require many different approaches to preschool development. (MDM)

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EXPERIENCES WITH THE SITUATION APPROACH IN ASIA

By Prof.Dr. Jürgen Zimmer

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Thailand

By air to Bangkok. Ten workshops in six countries in the next couple of weeks. The aim: to give assistance in the application of the Situation Approach and in the preparation of projects for the development of pre-school education. The parties concerned: Goethe Institutes, ministries, sponsors, universities, teacher training colleges and grassroots organizations.

Seat 9F in the plane is occupied by an eighteen month old child, a miniature Buddha. He is intent on the in-flight cinema creen, gazing at Momo, the child heroine of Michael Ende's children's classic, who was always doing good and never wasted a moment. Seat 9E is occupied by Buddha's father, who has been grumbling for the last 9000 kilometres. In seat 9G the Thai mother talks to the child and looks forward to returning to her family. Buddha's father must once have been deeply smitten - the wedding was in Patpong - but that was long ago.
Arrival.
Mrs Chaviwan Chung-Charoen of the Ministry of Education is leading the battle against pre-school programmes from America designed to train intelligence and bug-eyed monster comics from Japan. Her Thai network reaches out the grassroot organizations in the slums and far into the province to Chiangmai. There another educationist, Mrs Ratree Suwanaposee from the Teacher Training College, also advocates far-reaching changes.

Sixty planners, inspectors, lecturers and other members of the workshop in Bangkok are not prepared to accepted an imported package to meet their supposed needs. They want to develop an indigenous solution that takes into account the key problems of Thai children, submerged as they are in the detritus of neocolonial myths. The Thai approach is to plan learning programmes structured around local situations which take into consideration the culture and social values of their minority populations and can be organized with minimum cost. For the quantitative improvement - the number of nursery school places

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will be increased from 14 to 30 per cent during the next three years - is to be followed by a qualitative one.

Wait a minute. I tell them. Nobody can introduce a campaign of this kind in a few days. What we can do is to simulate such a situation and then discuss what is to be done. We start acting. The sixty people represent a community, they play mothers and fathers, neighbours, pavement cooks and people doing all kinds of odd jobs. Bangkok is their world, the key situations they try to find out are those of the children of Bangkok. About fifty such situations are identified and evaluated.

The result of the analysis is surprising: the most highly rated activity is *visiting a temple*. Buddhist fundamentalism? Are they looking for a ticket out of this world's disasters through religious ceremonies? Not at all, they say. This activity is a way of recalling our roots, an escape from the cultural invasion. The alien gods are the Japanese heroes of the war comics and Batman and Superwoman from the USA who fly through space and time. Thai children have been known to jump from tables thinking they too can fly. Like the story-book tailor from Ulm who invented a flying machine and invited the whole village to watch him cross the Danube. He crashes. Unlike him, fortunately, they do not drown. Thus *television* is another key issue: the box of tricks which changes the children of Bangkok into armed pterodactyls, Kung Fu fighters, cowboys, Muppets, Disney characters.

The *chaotic traffic* of Bangkok is another major issue. One third of all serious traffic accidents involve the death of children. Children not only have to be on their guard when the crossing lights are on green, but also in buses. Crime against children includes kidnapping and being sold into slavery, I learn. "Everything is changing", says Mrs Chaviwan sadly. "The old rules no longer apply". Here is a class struggle fought not through politics but through crime.

The problem of an *imbalanced diet* is another issue, not only for the very poor but also for the teenagers who are hooked on junk foods at the expense of a varied and healthy diet. A

teaching unit called "*A Little Farmer at Home*" is one answer, designed to show children how even in the slums they can grow vegetables in metal buckets and produce variety in their diet otherwise available only from the markets at a high price.
Onwards.
By road to Chiangmai in the north, where in the Golden Triangle three countries, Thailand, Laos and Burma, meet. This is where opium poppies are grown, the scene of periodic guerilla uprisings, the home of rebellious mountain people: the Mong, Karen, Akha, Yao, Lisu and Lahu. A policy of nation building exists which aims at incorporating the mountain peoples, who have their own languages, history and culture, into the one country, Thailand. There is no provision for regional autonomy for minority peoples. This is linguistic and cultural genocide. For several years the area has been covered with a network of schools: colonial outposts, mission posts in a cultural invasion from within. This situation is not exclusive to Thailand. The "our way or else ..." policy affects not only the Yao and Akha, but the aborigines in Australia, the Kurds in Turkey and Iraq, the Slovenes in the Carinthian region of Austria, the Mohawks near the US-Canadian border, the Turks in Berlin. Teachers from Changmai teaching in the Thai language in the schools of North Thailand find themselves the conveyors of a prescribed discipline rather than men and women with a vocation and a mission.

*

A jeep drive of a few hours out of the unpleasant heat of Changmai takes us across the Seven Dwarfs - the seven hills that lead to the Mong. Mrs. Ratree accompanies us. We leave behind the plantations and the metalled roads. The car cavorts like a wild elephant, for the latest rainstorms have changed the tracks into mud channels. Mountain forests are all around us. We meet a child, a woman and a man, all in the Mong dress, the man carrying a rifle. It is not far now to the village of Doi Pui on the slopes of Mount Suthep.

The village is poor, the huts more like shacks. Doi Pui was one of the last villages to hold out in the war of the Mongs against the Chinese, a war that lasted for centuries and finally banished the remaining 50,000 Mongs into the remote mountain

regions. Outside the village, on levelled ground the size of several football pitches, are the school and nursery school. A man is cutting the grass that fronts three primary school classes accommodated in a wooden building with a covered verandah.

We enter the first class. Seven pupils sit round a table, their heads buried in books. The room has an atmosphere of gloom. The teacher goes round the class like a wolf circling a flock of sheep. The Mong children are well trained and do not raise their heads but watch me out of the corner of their eyes. The teacher asks them to recite a text from the book. Teaching is by rote. I ask the teacher what the text is about and I am told that it is from a Thai history book. "Including that of the Mongs?" I ask. No, their history is not mentioned. I ask him whether he teaches the Mong anything that applies directly to them. Yes, he tells me, that they should stop stripping the forests for fuel. On the classroom wall is a picture story drawn by the pupils themselves about erosion and the flooding of the valley, the consequences of deforestation. I commend this aim but suggest that both the children and the adults ought to be taught how best to cultivate the land. The teacher smiles in embarrassment. He knows very little about agriculture.

I talk to another teacher and ask her whether she enjoys being in Doi Pui: No, she is looking forward to returning to the valley. The teachers do not really get to know people in the village. Sometimes they call on the parents to tell them that they must send their children to school as the law demands. Most parents are not interested. A few days earlier one father had welcomed her with an axe and driven her off. Sometimes the police are called in and take some of the parents off to prison.

"These teachers are useless", complains a seventy year old in the village. He is carrying a small child on his back and has a plait on his otherwise bald head. Other Mongs join us. "The children learn nothing that is of use to them in that school. All the teachers do is to stop them from doing useful work." There is not enough water in the village and it has to be brought in. It takes three hours to walk to their fields and

they often have to stay overnight. They cannot leave their children in the village. Who would look after them? The teachers? Once long ago, the old man recalls, his grandson came home and showed him how to make compost. That was the only time either of them had profited from school.

Were they opposed to their children learning only Thai in school? No, they continue to speak their own language in the village, the school is not important. I think they are wrong. They are conforming to the expectations of central government which aims to make regional languages redundant. As we talk, I watch a girl, her ear pressed to an ancient cassette recorder: the nearest Doi Pui comes to a disco.

I asked the teachers to tell me the main problem for these children. It proves to be a lack of protein in their diet. A village woman tells me: "Sometimes we eat pork, but only on special occasions, as when someone has died. Then, if the deceased has seven brothers, seven pigs are slaughtered." All that amount of meat cannot be eaten immediately but the Mongs do not know, or have forgotten, how to preserve meat. They let the meat rot, not on religious grounds, but simply because they have grown used to this waste. A young woman who had studied agriculture but could not find a job now teaches in the nursery school. I tell the teachers that they could set up a pig-breeding and preserving project on the school grounds and show the villagers how they might enjoy pork all the year round. Yes, they reply, they could do that but it is not in the curriculum. "That is true", Mrs Ratree tells me, "but is is also a great nonsense". It does not make sense for a curriculum development commission sitting in an ivory-tower ministry in Bangkok to decree what the children of the Mong people ought to learn. They don't know that the Mong need a dead person in order to eat well.

One last discussion in the village. What would they think of a school that not only produced pork all the year round but also treated it in such a way that it would not go off? They laugh. Not bad, they reply. We are ready to leave. Mrs Ratree is convinced that the teachers in her training college must also be

trained as community workers. We board the jeep and are approached by a mother who points to one of her children. "You can take her with you if you like", she tells Mrs Ratree. But Mrs Ratree is already fostering two Mong children. "I give them a good education", she tells me. Later I meet one of her foster daughters, a little Mong girl in a pink dress: a Snow White far from home who used to live with the Seven Dwarfs but now wants to become a doctor.

Down in the village they are preparing teaching units: how to fight head lice on children and parents; how to get rid of all the filth in and around the homes; how to encourage shy children to express their feelings. Only once did the children of the mountain tribes get a mention. The image of the mountains gets distorted through the lenses of the valley teachers. The children from up there are the ones who cannot speak Thai properly and swallow the word endings. They are dirty, half dumb and half deaf, difficult to handle, backward: Mong, Yao, Kurds, Slovenes, Mohawks.

The Mong doll I am given as a farewell present has Bambi eyes: Made in Disneyland, sold in the night market of Changmai.

Hong Kong

1997: the year when Hong Kong is returned to China, the point of decision which brings all planning to a full stop. In each family there is uncertainty. "We will stay here", says a woman worker. "Where else should we go? Nobody wants us." An inspector of nursery schools thinks aloud. Will she still be around or not? She has lots of relatives elsewhere, in the USA, England, Canada, Australia. A school director reflects: "We are neither fish nor fowl." British Chinese? Chinese British? Are the five and a half million who will not have the right of entry to the UK being sold off? Or are they returning to their natural Chinese home? What will happen when the border posts are taken away, hordes of Canton Chinese invade the former colony to participate in the gold rush? I recall Nicaragua: the braindrain to Miami of engineers, doctors and specialists of all kinds, the

sell-out of the revolution by those who had expected to live more comfortable lives onces they had thrown off the yoke of the dictator Somoza, not having to share limited resources with the poor. Are the poor going to be left behind in Hong Kong while the rich settle in Taiwan?

1997. The key situation for Hong Kong's children? It goes by another name: *homework*. All the participants in our workshop, inspectors, teachers, lecturers, name homework as the most important issue: more precisely, homework for *three year olds!* 1997 will wreak its revenge on the schools. A colony without a hinterland, with manpower as its only resource, responds to the issue with the philosophy of social Darwinism. Education is the ticket to the future, the passage through the eye of the needle. What kind of education then? Formal education, rote learning, differential curricula.

Three year olds learn the three r's. Chinese and English are tought daily in the nursery school and each day they spend a further half hour to an hour and a half on homework. The parents believe in a nursery school that prepares the children well for the entry examination into primary school. Hong Kong's educational system is a succession of examinations. What began in old China now comes full circle. The Chinese invented the examination system: whoever wanted to succeed in Mandarin China had to pass through it. The Jesuits imported the concept to Europe, the colonialists reintroduced it to Asia. In Hong Kong fish meets fowl. Here is the Chinese respect for examinations and the British expertise in standardising examinations: examination questions set by the Cambridge Board and results assessed by the Cambridge Board. Whole countries, colonies and ex-colonies alike, are stigmatised by their dependency on a system devised in England.

The participants in the workshop were not unaware of the problem; but teachers are prepared to accept most things when their economic base is threatened. They like children but follow the demands of the market without too much resistance. After all, most nursery schools are run as private enterprises: parents pay, parents have to say. Those parents who are

frightened of poverty put massive pressure on the nursery teachers. A nursery school in which children learn through play is viewed with grave suspicion. What they want is instruction through drills, the school of their great-grandfathers, the school where everything must be learnt by heart, as in the Sunday Schools established by those missionaries who, having themselves grown up in poor circumstances, know nothing better.

Pre-school education as a drill not only determines subject content but the timetable too. Lessons lasting 10 to 20 minutes make up the pattern whereby the children are guided through the day like marionettes. In the Lady Trench Nursery School even the undirectable is directed: at 10 o'clock, 11.50, 12.30. 14.45 and 16.30, the children have to make their way without exception in crocodile lines to the toilets. Breakfast is from 8.55 to 9.20, afternoon sleep from 12.40 to 14.45. The indoor activities on a Tuesday afternoon for four and five year olds include the following subjects and activities:

- my body: the functions of the muscles and the bones;
- language: in Chinese, description of the main muscles and favourite games that involve the muscles, and in English, learning the song *I nod my head and clap my hands;*
- listening comprehension: in Chinese, myself and the body, in English, the words *head* and *hand* as well as the letters H and K;
- writing: B, H, hand, colouring a man on a prepared worksheet;
- mathematics: differentiating three to five objects according to size and colour;
- art: stringing together beads, joining dots;
- music and movement: the game *Touch your head;*

and, at the end of this rush hour:

- two stories *The Little Red Hen* and *Brown Puppy's Special Day*.

The furniture: plastic chairs, plastic tables, plastic shelves. In another nursery school run by the Salvation Army at least there is a small kitchen area in the classroom. Alas, it is not for preparing real food but for simulations: plastic fruit and plastic vegetables, plastic plates and plastic cutlery, plastic hats and plastic aprons. It is a child's world, but a childhood

of pretty uniforms, easy to clean, an artificial childhood. Nursery school, then homework, followed by television. Hong Kong's children cannot go outside to play. Where is there to got? Life in Hong Kong.

The flats are small and overcrowded. Lim and her husband show me through the labyrinth of dirty corridors, staircases and lifts into a small, narrow flat on the sixteenth floor of an estate block. Along the walls are boxes, household utensils, laundry, *kitsch*, their wedding photograph. Their four year old son concentrates hard on his homework tasks. It has to be like that, say the parents. They themselves were unable to complete their schooling and now they have to slave away. Only if their son passes the examination and goes to a good school will he have a chance in life. "A *good* school?" I ask. Yes, a private school, where they use the same teaching methods as in the nursery school. The myth of the field marshal's baton in the knapsack is a substitute for the struggle to reorganize the allocation of wealth.

Those who have money hire private teachers at ridiculous cost. The shipping magnat in Guildford Road who owns a Rolls Royce as well as other cars employs four teachers for his son. Hans Magnus Enzenberger, who advocates the abolition of schools and the return to private tutors, may see how the well-off manage very well with them. The poor have a much shorter life span. There are the boat people of Aberdeen, families who are used to living on junks. This is the situation for their children: a time for accidents, fires, despair. The best teaching unit so far devised in Hong Kong gives survival training for children in how to cope with the dangers from gas, electricity and fire and teaches them to know how to avoid death by suffocation and to make themselves heard.

1997: so far the nursery school experts of Hong Kong are not in touch with their foreign colleagues in Kanton. But they would like to do so to find out whether they can co-operate. "We'll do the next seminar about the situational analysis together with

you and the experts over there, half here and half there", they say. "And we'll show them nursery schools which not only prepare for school, but for life as well."

Indonesia

Centralism in Indonesia: the tedious task of keeping together the group of thirteen thousand islands, with many different ethnic groups and languages, through the process of "directed democracy". Moslems, Buddhists, Christians, Hindus: to keep the peace each nursery school has a religious corner with miniature temples, mosques, churches. There are not many nursery schools in Indonesia, enough for only five per cent of the age group. Children from rich families living in towns get a chance; all the others hardly any.

Can a centrally-developed compulsory curriculum possibly unite Malays and Chinese, Moslem and Hindu, townspeople and farmers? In fact it leaves everyone dissatisfied. Not only do the cultural backgrounds and languages differ in Sulawesi, Kalimantan, Java, Sumatra and Bali; there are also differences in development, the uneven modernization of the country. The business world of Jakarta is centuries ahead of the small village a mere 300 kilometres away.

The rate of change is exemplified in the conflict between generations: teachers identify as one key issue the fact that parents refuse to answer their children's questions. In 1948 the older generation rid themselves of their Dutch masters. Now the younger generation grows up with imported serial films. "That's why I don't go to discos", says Erna, studying for a Master's degree at her university and at the same time the founder of an organization for children. Erna believes in Allah but Moslems in Jakarta have nothing in common with the fundamentalists of Tehran or Kuala Lumpur. Their God does not demand that the faces of His female children be covered. "Education for self-reliance is important", says Erna. She is quoting from someone who lives a long way from Jakarta: Julius Nyerere of Tanzania. Emerge from the pre-colonial myths without becoming the slaves to new myths.

Don't talk to strangers, the times are dangerous, parents tell their children. That is why children do not speak to their teachers: they think they are strangers. This is a situation recounted to me by teachers which not only reveals a misunderstanding, but is also an expression of the disruption in society. The children's world in the towns consists increasingly of strangers and the strange, ever-growing businesses, the office blocks and shopping malls of goods from Hong Kong and Seoul, Tokyo and Jakarta, the inflow of all kinds of identical industrial products, a seeming deluge which results in cultural confusion and destruction - Rambo instead of Ramayana.

In Jakarta the same phenomenon: Nursery schools as primary schools. At 9.40 in the morning you can see that, visiting four or five classes, all the children in the Kanak-Kanak nursery school in Juanda Street 29 are doing the same. Yesterday at the same time they were painting triangles, circles and squares with red, green and blue colours in their exercise-books. Today they are painting the flag and the uniform of an army soldier, who defends the country - a machine gun ready to fire - against whom? Tomorrow the five principles of Indonesian policy are going to be painted on the pages 10 to 15 in the painting-book: the star that symbolizes the belief in an omnipotent god; the chain, with its united elements pointing to the solidarity of all Indonesians; the deeply rooted Banjan-tree which represents the unity; the bull head which stands for democracy, or rather: the state governed by strong leaders. The last symbols, rice and cotton, signify the principle of social welfare. All these signs reappear in the national banner, on the shield of the powerful eagle. This picture is very difficult to paint for its numerous feathers, and that is why the painting-book won't be completed until the day after tomorrow.

Singapore

Chinese, Malays and Indians in Singapore, three cultures, three languages with English as a common language. Ninety per cent of the children succeed in getting a nursery school place. All grow

up bilingual. Singapore is like Hong Kong: back to basics, drills which prepare them for the same kind of examintions run by a remote examination board. Many schools at least do offer an indoor free activity period and in many the teaching and play materials are produced by teachers themselves and not purchased. The English influence includes that of Lady Plowden, whose report in the 1960s proclaimed an open education, a child-oriented nursery and primary school reform.

Children in the lift: this, the key issue mentioned in Singapore, implies more than just the difficulties experienced by children using lifts by themselves. Ever since Singapore's rows of old houses disappeared, and the big family groups were divided and put into small flats in the new high-rise blocks, there has been no room for teenagers, no place to build peer group relationships. Singapore is being overtaken by urban modernization, just like that in the Märkisches Viertel in Berlin. However hard the People's Association, partly state-funded, tries to organize the teenagers, more and more of them are beyond its reach, and beyond the control of their overworked parents, too. There are numbers of unattached youths, drop-outs and young people lingering in the supermarket precincts, dressed as punks.

"Would it be possible to develop production schools in Singapore?" asks Lee Chiong Giam, one of the Association directors. "Possibly", I reply and suggest an open forum with the teenagers to ask their opinions. There might be better alternatives. The idea of teenagers living together in a sort of commune has not yet been mentioned, but Horst Pastoors of the Goethe Institute predicts that this will soon be a topic of discussion.

Being an only child: not just a key issue for the few, but increasingly for many families in Singapore. Lee Kuan Yew with his one-a-family policy, where "left" and "right" politics form a contradictory mixture almost like Peronism in Argentina, succeeded in lowering the birthrate so drastically that even from the point of view of the state there is now a population shortfall. Well-educated mothers, those with degrees, are now

being rewarded by being allowed to have more children. This is not a racial but a class-specific eugenic policy which could well have sprung from the pages of science fiction.

Malaysia

I arrive in Kuala Lumpur, to stay in the Hotel Merlin. One minute after I reach my room, the phone rings: "Want a nice girl?" "No, thank you."
"Sweet Chines girl, not Malayan."
"No thank you, really."
The Chines do not like the Malays. Ricky Liew, a producer of teaching materials, tells me: "They are not as industrious as we are." The Chinese control the trade, where the big money is, the Malays the administration, where the political influence lies. In the towns there is heavy competition: in the country, Malay farmers follow tradition. In this conflict the Indian minority hardly counts.

This state of affairs was brought about by the British colonialists who found difficulty in recruiting enough workers for their plantations and factories from amongst the Malays: stubborn, traditional farmers, fools who stuck to their land and property. So the British imported Chinese labourers, who later went into commerce and industry because there was a shortage of land. The situation today is fortunately not that of 1969, the night of the long knives, but nevertheless there is still competition for every square metre of the social terrain. Even in the nursery schools ...

Nursery schools in Malaysia are within the private sector. Anybody can open one and charge the parents for the facility. The takings can be high for the owners of those opened where the rich live. On the other hand, the customers make heavy demands. They want a proper school with the most modern materials from overseas. The language of these nursery schools must be English, not Bahasa Malaysia, not Mandarin, not Tamil. Learning to read and write in the mother tongue is of no importance to these wealthy families. English is the language that opens the gates

to the business world. Only because the government has recently introduced Malay as the main language in the primary school do children in the last year of the nursery school learn the official language of their country.

Is the question of language merely one of the social class? No, it is also one of race. The Malays who have the political power want to make Bahasa Malaysia the official language and push all the others into the background, according to the Chinese and Indians. English, the language of the colonial power, now becomes a weapon of resistance against a race. The frontiers of conflict are changing. Nancy Yip Wai-Yee's young son, aged three, copes with this conflict by learning perfect English from his teachers who received their training in the prestigious Montessori Centre in London. He can already read, write and calculate in three languages, English, Mandarin and Bahasa Malaysia; and, because all this is very demanding and stretches him beyond his capacities, this poor harassed rich boy has extra private coaching on top of school and homework.

As there is no agreement from within, what comes from outside is what counts. In Malaysia's secondary schools, the spirit of the Cambridge examination board prevails. In higher education too: there is not a single PhD thesis in the Faculty of Education which has not been cross-marked by a foreign examiner.

"The problem is not only that they are Chinese and rich, but also that they are not Moslems," Suradi Salim, lecturer at the Malay University, tells me. Many female Malay students agree with him. Since my last visit to the campus two years previously, nothing has changed so much as the apprearance of these female students. Most wear the chadur and are totally vailed. In my workshop I can see no more of the Moslem teachers sitting in the front row than their face and hands. Fatimah, their leader, even covers her forehead, nose and mouth and hides her eyes behind dark glasses.

It is not so much the influence of Iran or Saudi Arabia that leads the female students from this country to revolt in this way, but confrontation with the corruption of Islamic values

that emanates from the towns. "You see," says Suradi, himself the son of farmers and educated in a state boarding school, "many of us have not been following the precepts laid down in the Koran." It is a flight into an inner world. Nevertheless, the rules of Malaysian capitalism are unaffected by social consideration and carry on regardless. "That is why," says Suradi, "the fundamentalists are likely to give up their inner world soon and fight for a better stake in society."

Key concerns that cause friction in this country: *getting children to hold hands - the boys are afraid they will have to marry the girls*. Quite a common fear, the teacher tells me, but one which changes with adulthood. "Double standards" says Patricia Lim furiously, reflecting on the behaviour of Chinese men who, surrounded by girl friends, keep their wives imprisoned in house, kitchen and bedroom and do not allow them to have friends or to work.

Fatimah and her colleagues do not give up. While all the other workshop participants are developing teaching units based on *survival*, her title is *life*. Fatimah believes that her children should learn how to live in accordance with the teachings of the Koran. They must learn more than mere techniques for survival. Her children have the right to realize coherences: that life means spirit, soul and body, three in one. Life is also a matter of basic needs, but not only for human beings. People have to discover their responsibility in their dealings with animals, plant life and the universe. Living in a community, they are bound to respect God's laws.

"How are you going to pass all this on to the children?" I ask. By planting a garden for and with them, they tell me. In the garden there is life, the rules of the universe may be observed there. To prepare the ground involves their physical as well as mental powers. Working together teaches self-discipline. Sowing, planting, harvesting, preparing fruits and eating them, selling the surplus, giving the money to charities, making medicines, dyes and fibres from the plants, weaving cloth, being patient, learning not to give up, treating nature and neighbours with compassion: all these can come from gardening. From a

garden could be developed a curriculum about God and the world. So be it. They are going to plant their orange tree and pay their debts while all around them the gold-diggers mark out their territories and kill one another.

In the country side it is still peaceful. Wild boar root in the rain forest, paddy fields are got ready. There, in the middle of nowhere, in the village of Terachi, lives the teacher Hjh. Halimah bt. Hj. Ahmad, which means that she, Halimah, has visited Mecca and is the daughter of Ahmad, who has also visited the holy city. She teaches the first form in the Kebangsaan School. Entering the classroom one does not meet with the usual sight. The children do not sit in rows, they are not all measured with the same yardstick, the walls are not bare. The teacher does not stand in the front. Teaching materials are not bought but are made in the classroom or come from the village. Halimah is a teacher of the new breed. Her class is taught according to the principles of open learning; small groups work concurrently on different topics. Personal interests and individual abilities are catered for. In this class independent children learn to become independent adults.

The Philippines

Sunday in Manila, 10.30 local time. A look at the television programme - a first impression of a cultural selling-off. Nevertheless, while for example the little Caribbean island of Dominica gets their software via 12 satellite channels from the USA, this morning you can receive one station with a Philippine show, another with an American film about the persecution of the Christians in ancient Rome and a third on an American evangelist acting in Manila. "Look", he tells the Philipinos, "in the countries without Bible there is constraint, like in the Soviet Union. In those countries where the Bible is of little importance, there is little liberty. God is with us." This morning God's representative is called Jimmy Swaggart, a smartly dressed type with a lilac tie, who provides after-treatment under the telephone numbers 785144 and 785100 and sells books. In Nicaragua in 1981, at the time of the great health campaign,

the Campesinos refused to have their children inoculated against epidemics , because the colleagues of Jimmy, American sectarians, had pounded into their heads that the needles were infected with communism.

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Children of Manila, of the slums, of the waste, of the streets. Smokey Mountain, the smokey rubbish heap of the town, where refuse lorries dump out the rubbish day and night. At the foot of the mountain, a monster of dirt, rot, plastic, mud, where about 20.000 people live in shacks, the plate and wood of which comes from the rubbish of which they are living. 70 per cent of the Philipinos live below the subsistance level. The misery at Smokey Mountain is even more dreadful than that in the Favelas of Rio de Janeiro or São Paulo.

In the Barrio Bayan the shacks are all flooded. The water is black. It is the stinking slush the mountain gives off like a burst corpse. Tony Santos, a social worker and I trudge through the knee-high mud. We are approaching Bayan from above. On the peak of the mountain collectors are digging. They're looking for plastic, bones, tins, paper. Those who are collecting plastic earn one mark for a day's work. The sorted rubbish is given to a middleman. It is the others who are making the profit. They are working in shifts, for there is not enough work for everybody. At night you can see small lights on the mountain, miserable lamps, with the faint light with which they are doing their work.

Between the shacks and sheds in the Barrio Bayan there are small foot-bridges and stones, showing us the way. We get to a self-made school. Boxes on the muddy ground for about forty children. The room has less than 20 square metres, the roof is a piece of patchwork, the walls have large holes, an old blackboard, two or three banners with the slogans of the community groups. The barrios at the mountain are well organized in the Peoples Council of the Smokey Mountain, 1000 of the 3000 families are active participants. The "Peoples Power" of the Philippines Marcos had to give way to. There becomes a sort of political movement that fights for the redistribution of the

wealth. In Navatos, the district nearby, it is the Unity of the People, a community organization, that has its own school where teachers work as teachers and community workers. The school in Bayan is a sunday school where volunteers are working. Their curriculum develops from the situations in the barrio, they teach how to deal with diseases, how to live with and from the waste and - what is most important - how to get organized. The upper class doesn't share their wealth voluntarily with the poor. On the Philippines they have to be asked to pay up, like everywhere. Cory Aquino should finally initiate the agrarian reform and put higher taxes on the rich, says one of the neighbours.

Korokan, a riverside slum in the southeast of Manila. The river is a slow, stinking and brown stream. The riverside area is about half a meter higher than the river. The river floods the region about 3 times a year after a typhoon. The water floods the shacks, takes them away, crushes them. The children who don't run away on time, get drowned. The Batibot Daycare Association has founded an alternative school in Korokan: open teaching oriented towards life in a wooden hut with happy children. Members of the association are Malon Sosis, neighbour and president, Remy Terrez, vice-president, Tess Odnya, secretary and the members, all of them women. More skin than bones, they get up and smile. Photo. Yes, I'll send it to them.

200 metres down the road there is the regular school: 50 children in a classroom, sitting in a row, the teacher and the blackboard is in front of them. The teacher approaches me and says: "Inspectors, it's not my fault that the children are in such bad conditions, the parents don't support the teachers." No, no, don't worry, I reply, I was not from the ministry. Anyway, says the teacher, it is a lousy job.

In Tondo, Manila's largest slum to which Smokey Mountain also belongs, in the Kahandin Street a group of parents have organized their own co-operative, the Unlad Bata, which works here. 45 children, 43 adults - always with two parents in rotation to help the kindergarten teachers. It is a kindergarten at the very bottom. Chit Salvador, the chairman, shows the

living conditions in the neighbourhood. The river is also close by here. The huts are even worse than those on Smokey Mountain. People live here in boxes, in crates and in wrecked cars. Because of lack of space their dwellings are partly piled on top of each other or overlap. We creep along a small way in to the centre. In the semi-darkness an old woman is squatting. She lives in five square metres. Her niche is a little longer, higher and wider than a coffin. One cannot stand up, just cower. The woman has nothing to eat. Her hands shake. She will not live much longer. I ask if there are any toilets. No, they all relieve nature onto newspaper, wrap it up and carry it to the river. Between the houses are streamlets, sewers from which mangy dogs and rats drink.

A key problem for the children, says Chit, is malnutrition. *Junk food* - a term which will later become the title of a didactic unit; junk food, the imitation of false eating, the artificial potatoe chip, on which the sprayed on red pepper also fakes; jung food - which kills the hunger without bringing the body the elementary nourishment.

In some distance 100 fishing families live in Metro Manila in straw huts, they are almost a village. The men fish mussels and small fish in the contaminated brackish water, using dug-outs. "We don't reach the fishing grounds, and we don't have the money to buy motorboats." But they are tapping water and electricity for free, they call it 'flying connections', and the police don't dare to prevent them from doing so. The poor Manila puts taxes on the rich.

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Investigations in Ermita, the red light district of Manila. I am together with Victor, one of a small group of social workers who want to build dams. The flood has made a long way. Manila has become a second Mekka - after Bangkok - for the foreigners, the paedophiles, the homosexuals, the sextourists. Since Francis Ford Coppola mad his film "Apocalpyse now" somewhere in the jungle years ago and for years, the paedophiles and homosexuals

following him, changed the villages of the area radically and turned the children into prostitutes. Today in Manila many children of the street live mainly on prostitution.

Arrival of the clients in Ermita shortly after 6 pm with jeepneys and taxis. There is a crowd, a husband pulls away his wife who goes on the game there. Bars, girls, visitors, children. We go along the street to see whether somebody starts talking to us. A boy Victor knows, who is called Diego, says hello. Diego doesn't work as prostitute, his job is to help the clients out of their cars and then to stay with the cars. He gets 50 Centavos for this. Like the prostitutes he sleeps in the streets.

He looks for Ronny, another boy. We go to eat in one of the open kitchens, from where we have a good view on the street. "My visitor is coming in a moment", says Ronny, "he'll wait for me on the other side of the street." There is a fast-food restaurant, the trade centre for 'professional' love. We start talking about the clients. "Mine wants to take me to France", says Ronny. "He has already given money to my family. He wants to send me to a school." New hope or just the words of a client, spoken into the wind?

When is the business good, when bad? "During the weekend we have rush-hour." That's a good time, we make much money, and the families get a lot of this money. Bad times are not only at the beginning of the week, but also when the gangs of the older children demand protection fees of the younger ones. What do they want to become when they are older and the visitors don't want them any longer? "An engineer", says one of them. Or: "Work in an office". Office, top management, a mercedes with telephone and a lot of money. How they want to become this? "Well", says Diego, "maybe we should got to school again." Diego is like Huckleberry Finn, dirty, daring, a worker. Ronny is a dreamer, looks sweet, is dressed neatly. Both of them are twelve years old. And the others who join us later are either workers or prostitutes, as they tell us. They possess the capabilities they need to survive, and in this respect they are superior to the European children.

"My friend is over there", Ronny exclaims. I say to him: "Go and ask him to come here, I want to talk to him." Ronny goes. I doubt whether the client would dare to come, but he does. "What do you want?" he asks me. "Talk to you." "Are you from the police or a journalist?" "I am not here as a journalist and I am not from the police either." He comes from Lyon, Pierre, a frail type, about 35, an academic with his own business, travelling a lot. "Manila is a dream of mine, and I prefer the boys." "And you want to take your boy to France?" Pierre turns to Ronny and snaps at him: "You're talking too much." I tell him that after all it didn't matter to me whether he would take him to Lyon or not, he shouldn't get excited.

I tell Pierre that the boys wanted to go to school again and become engineers or something similar, and in a couple of years the paedophiles wouldn't be interested in them any longer. Pierre laughs: "They wouldn't leave. Ermita is their school, life is their school. What they experience here is more exciting than any lesson." I insist and reply that all he said sounded great, but didn't change anything about the fact that paedophiles were paedophiles and that boys grew older. And that they - in contrast to their rich clients - didn't have much chances if they didn't learn anything else. He didn't have to imagine the school as boring as his one in Lyon at the time. I ask him: "How would you organize a school here, if you were the headmaster?" Pierre doesn't know. But then he, Victor, the boys and I are talking for over an hour about a different school in Ermita, the school that prepares for the time later on. Pierre thinks it should be organized in such a way to be flexible. It's because if he, the client, wanted to have his boy in bed in the morning, it ought to be possible. "Yes, and I won't go to school on fridays and saturdays", says Diego, "rather at the beginning of the week." This means opening a monday and tuesday school, a school with an open planning which is oriented towards the abilities of the children, a school where you can earn money and learn something in addition. It's the idea of a productive community school in the red-light district of Manila that develops here.

And why only there? Why not develop one at the Smokey Mountain as well, a school that uses adequate technologies of recycling? Wouldn't it help to keep the profit the buyers and recyclers of the waste have made until now? And why not develop a productive community school in Kahandin Street in Tondo? Chit Salvador tells me later that they - the neighbours - were all prepared to co-operate. A school one could earn one's living with was much better than a school that didn't deal in the least with the problems of the people. They would also know a gap in the market the school could fill with what they produced. The school should become a kitchen for the district in which they would cook cheap, nutritions meals, where the children and adults could learn to grow the vegetables on the roofs, at the river, along the rivulets. The school as a kitchen that explains the contradictions of the world with the water they get from the brackish well.

The idea becomes actual planning, applications and the perspective develop, to come back and not only talk about a different school, but to help develop it bit by bit. Like in Belo Horizonte in Brazil where 350 children and adults live on such a school. The next workshop in Manila will take place in Ermita: with pimps and police as guest speakers, the Mafia as patron, clients and children as school planners and curriculum developers.

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Key situation: *children between the fronts*, wounded, tortured, shocked children. In the workshop with Philippine representatives of grass-roots organizations, sponsors and ministries, this situation is highly rated. I ask what this means concretely. The participants report of daily occurrences, in which children lose their lives in the dispute between the army and the guerillas (because, for example, they give a false answer to a soldier's question and are suspected of collaborating), are injured or mishandled. A sharp controversy develops. Participants from Metro Manila claim that such things don't happen. Those from the regions counter that the city

dwellers have no idea about the realities of the country. In the areas where fighting is taking place the teachers follow the teaching plan of the government in the mornings and that of the New People's Army in the afternoons.

The representatives of the ministries come under crossfire. Only a few years ago they had the say. The curricula which they thought out in their offices had nation-wide validity, but were wide of the mark with regard to the socio-cultural topography of the island. The development of a curriculum from key situations means regionalisation, the denial of exclusively-central decisions. Now the ministry officials take pains to show their understanding. Their suggestion to include a text about the war children in the reading book harvests laughter. It is not a question of helping them to survive. Such a curriculum can, say the delegates from the regions, only be developed with those who have previous experience.

People's Power - a nation sets off after years of dictatorship, chances for a Philippine education, to combine learning with transformation and community development: learning with and for the community. Children are not excluded, not in times of starting radical changes.

Philippine Epilogue

Two years later: in four southern provinces, including on the island of Mindanao, which is being fought over by the army, Moslem guerrillas and left-wing revolutionary guerillas, groups of several hundred educators have formed in order to develop their first Philippine curriculum over the next few months. The situation approach there is no longer called "Alone at home in the evenings" or "Getting lost in the city" but "How to survive a typhoon", "Surviving on a sinking boat", "Surviving during gunfire" or "Tortured children". The around 170 key situations mirror the desperate reality of the country. The Situation Approach is linked together here with the grass-roots movements, women's organizations, rural workers' unions, basis communities.

The Philippine campaign runs quickly and improvises without money. From Mindanao parts of a sound Philippine reform philosophy are developed and spread out.

- One should not just perform reforms for a few but try to undertake something together with as many people as possible. A reform is legitimate when the control of questions, procedures and results becomes a public matter.

- The world of the school is dominated by myths which encroach upon the kindergarten and have to be demystified over and over again: from the myth of increased performance through repetitive and dismembered learning; the myth of the exact plan which builds on parameters which do no occur in an uncertain reality; the myth of the fence all around which shuts out real life.

- Educational initiatives ebb lightly when they are not allied with stronger social movements.

In the Philippines the conflict rages between the military and the guerillas; in between are the decided democrats - most of whom belong to the grass-roots organizations: democracy not as the buying of votes or the parliament of the millionaires but as a breaking out away from the impoverished peripheries. "Buy Philippine" - a didactic unit which would be ideologically unthinkeable in Europe; "Buy Philippine" - that means already learning to read the back of the packages of goods as a child and just not buy the packet of Storck Chocolate, under licence of August Storck KG Halle (Westfalen). The national industry almost doesn't belong to the nation anymore; there is valid to care for one's own delicate economic plants and to learn how one can develop one's economy through trust in one's own strength.

"Not to be cheated by middle men" is another didactic unit, it is relevant for the many children on Smokey Mountain who collect rubbish, sort it out, sell it to middle men and get cheated by them at the scales. In this way the children learn to

count alongside, they learn all about scales and profit margins and the lousy tricks to try and take away even the last Peso from their pocket.

From a Philippine perspective many key situations of western children seem more like artificial problems of a childhood organized and adjusted by educators and soft ware producers. The situation approach meanwhile takes place not just in kindergartens but - unnamed - in the peace and ecology movement. The key situation is called "Weapons Factory" or "Autobahn 92" or "Runway West" ("Startbahn West"), the appropriation of knowledge about rockets, poison gas, ecological clearing or the disposal of radioactive waste, takes place not just with the intention of making situations more threatening or to understand already-manifest catastrophies, but to change them, or better and more modest: to avoid them.

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Two years later in Cardona at the shallow Laguna Lake, not far from Metro Manila: illegal large-scale landholding has developed on the lake. The rich are breeding fish in the vast areas they reserved for themselves by putting close-meshed bamboocanes. The lake is parceled out completely, it has a honeycombed pattern. There are watch-towers with armed vigilantes that demonstrate that there is a striking difference in the right of property for one part of the population and the other. The small fishers of Cardona have less and less fishing-grounds, not enough to survive.

The teacher Purita is obsessed by the idea to found a school on which she and the children could live. Not to catch fish, but to breed ducks and pigs. They can be sold well on the market. The children of the fishers ought to learn not to live on the lake, almost all of which is taken by others, but to use the land. Purita consulted with other teachers in Manila who are also interested in developing a productive community school: they want to build up a school at Smokey Mountain, - the smokey rubbish heap of the town - that lives on recycling, one in Tondo that fights against *junk-food* and produces cheap and nutritious meals; a school in Santa Mesa wants to produce toys, another one

on the Roxas Boulevard wants to open a street restaurant - schools in the old tradition, but places where the children learn to think, small fishes with sharp teeth who cannot devour the big ones, but at least bite them.

The teacher Purita knows that she has to forget about her educational concepts in the colonial tradition. While the tasks are well known, the solutions are not. Learning often takes place in insecurity. The lack of capital - the few pesos scraped together are just enough to buy a pig - have to be compensated with more knowledge.

They and their children have to become local masters in breeding pigs and ducks. They have to talk to breeders and veterinarys, read books of which they can't find out everything about pigs and ducks, they have to observe the animals and learn how to make calculations that are not merely a result of whishful thinking.

It becomes clearer how the pig and duck producing school in Cardona will be organized. Everything becomes part of the curriculum: construction of the school and of pens, market analysis, looking after the animals, marketing, investment, calculation, the organization of the work and self-government. Fundamental cultural techniques can be learnt in the productive correlation. It makes more sense to write diaries about pigs when the well-being of the animals and the income can be improved. The old subjects are of no use any longer, at least not in the way they present their knowledge. The new subjects ought to be oriented by the key problems of the breeding, says the teacher. The new subjects are for example called "How to make pigs happy"; that's because happy pigs have lots of small pigs who are having still more babies when they are grown up - that's what the children think.

That means learning everything about the psychology of pigs, watch them carefully and find out that they are like you and me, sometimes jealous, sometimes in a bad temper or playing tricks, in any case sensitive. Another subject, "How to feed the animals with minimal costs" points to the water-lilies, weeds growing

behind the bamboo canes on the lake. "We can dry the water-lilies and feed the pigs with them", says one of the neighbours. But what about the ducks? There is a fish living on the excrements of the ducks. And there are snails eating the excrements of these fish. Ducks again like eating snails. Homework: How much water does a lake hasve to contain, so that not only 800 ducks can swim happily on the lake, but that there is enough oxigene beneath the surface, so that the fish don't suffocate because of the excrements of the ducks. How many fish are necessary for how many snails for how many ducks? Where do they come from, in what circumstances do the procreate? Can the Philippine curriculum offer solutions to this kind of investigating learning? Never ever? That's just the point!

Nothing goes smoothly in the smudgy reality. The vision on the horizon can dissolve into grey dust. The pigs might all die of a plague, the snails may all be crushed by mud in the next typhoon. It may be true that happy pigs have a lot of young ones, but the question is whether the children can wait until then without starving. Who teaches them to use the unproductive time as well, to produce and sell peanut butter while the first pig is gravid? Who prevents them from the false expectation of a quick profit, who helps them see it through, who explains to them that they couldn't do anything else but work for their common task day and night, that the conception of economics from below can't survive merely with a great idea and enthusiasm, but that it ought to be realized step by step?

A couple of months later the small school in Cardona gives up the ghost. The only pig - happy, gravid and soon bearing - that should get the business started, couldn't withstand the economic pressure together with its brood. When the piglets were big enough, every child took one of them, took it home full of content and thought that the school had fulfilled its purpose.

The pictures are overlapping. On the one hand there are our German children, the children on the long march through the educational institutions, the children who are expelled, displaced, transmitted, classified, selected, marked, supervised, restricted to tables and chairs, didactically

influenced, the children watching TV series. And on the other hand the children of Asia - homunculi of Japanese trick film studios, children handled badly by educationalists, desperately poor and sold children: maybe one single person or God cannot manage everything on his own, maybe the great coalition is between the wise Buddha, the mighty Allah and our good God. Maybe the three are all images of the one idea. The utopia can be realized in our nearest surroundings, Ernst Bloch says, it's only that you need a cut telescope to recognize it. Here and now, not tomorrow and afterwards.